

(Copy)

Ship Henry Astor, at sea,
 "off shore." Lat. 55° S. Long. 124° W
 Aug. 10. 1842.

William Mitchell Esqr.

Most respected fr'd
 In looking over the pages of an old
 "Scrap-Book" which had been long
 thrown by, as an article of useless trash,
 in which I had formerly put down a
 stray thought or two, to keep them to-
 gether, and prevent their falling by the
 way side, or in stony places; or becom'g
 contaminated by the corrupting influ-
 ences of the world; I found a few pages
 purporting to be an extract of a letter
 to you. I think that I did not
 send it on at the time when it was
 written, which I see by the date was
 almost a year ago: if I did, when
 you sit down in your arm chair
 to puff Sarraw away light your pipe
 with this. Friend William, I have
 certainly written to you, have I not?
 I have no record of the fact, and as
 to a reply you are as silent as the grave.

In addressing a friend with the pen.
 how sincerely I could wish that I
 might once in my life hit upon the
 true medium, for this is the grand object

in all things; but I must conclude that my composition is above or below price; the former it cannot be, for it would be extremely paradoxical for us to expect any thing even a shade above mediocrity from the pen of a whaler. If, however I could once succeed in hitting the nails on the head I should no doubt receive an answer. But before we proceed, for we have not got into the "Scrap-book," yet, I beg of you not to let the God of this world so completely absorb all your mental faculties as to think of nothing but those shimmers and thin rag representations, which it has become your special business to handle.

I was extremely well pleased to see a very handsome compliment in the Boston Evening Transcript, to Mr. William Mitchell of Nantucket, who delivered a lecture on Astronomy in the Masonic Temple: What a splendid lecture room! Those Boston folks will have things any how! In fact they can do almost any thing in Boston except make quakers and raise Mattheus cats. But without joking I feel a degree of pride and of exultation whenever I meet the Capt. and officers of a Mon-of-war, to be able

to say that this same Mr. Mitchell, who now and then instructs the good citizens of Boston, is a native born child of Nantucket; and that I have known him from a boy up; and that he is moreover (and in this I glory) a self taught scholar. This being strictly true it is not to be placed to my ^{acc't} as flattery. I have, at my elbow, one of Murray's best editions of English Grammar; and in my leisure moments I occasionally turn its pages: not that I expect, (as young Bowditch told his Captain, when he was perverting out the errors in *Hamilton Moor*) to take out a copy right in my own name; neither have I copied the grammar from beginning to end as Wm. Cobbett told me I ought to do. At this age of life all I aim at is to understand a few of the rules which govern our language.

In thus boldly launching my career into deep water I meant not have you infer that every sentence of my composition shall be completely free from errors — that every line shall be ready when it leaves my pen for the types and roller, that at all.

But to prove to you that I have made some improvement in my studies I will now promise to give you

a scrip containing fewer grammat-
ical inaccuracies than any thing that
came from my pen during the time
I was a member of the Gen. Court.

You now see what a noble
hand I am to promise, and you shall
presently see how well I can per-
form.

As you well know, the
very essence of a Lunar observation
depends on the exact admeasurement
of the angular distance between the
Sun and moon or other heavenly
bodies; this I can do to a charm,
rugged or smooth, always using an
inverting telescope; and the very es-
sence of grammar I find to be the
conjugation of the verb, through all its
moods and tenses. Don't let me startle
you, for I would not have you
suppose that I pretend to follow the
verb through all its intricate twist-
ings and turnings according to the
real school-boy grammar. No sir. It is
for common practical purposes that
I feel desirous of being able to correct
a sentence of false Syntax - that's all.
I am aware what you'll say to
this, "Stick to the rule tho' each case
should be filled with demisemiquavers"
As to tenses, instead of six, why

could you not ^{have} kept their number down to two or at any rate to three? you know that I have authority for this suggestion; but let this pass.

Before I sail my craft further from soundings I must request in regards to the bold stand which I took in the out set, that if you sh'd happen to run foul of ^{an} war before you arrive at the end, pass lightly over it:—indeed, a single spark of your unbounded charity will smooth all down to the horizontal level of a rail-road track.

For my own part I cannot boast of having had in my early life any great learning worth mentioning, and yet I can boast of having received at home (the only proper place to receive it) a most excellent education. I can boast also of having selected a profession; and of having followed that profession; closely pursuing it through its several stages and finally arriving at the head of it. of having reared a family and kept my self clear of debt. In thus speaking of my own case I am not unmindful of the old maxim. "Young folks tell what they do, old ones what they have done, and fools what they wish to do."

But is this egotistical in the strict sense of the word? is it bragging? is it vain glorious? I trust not. If we can discover beauties in the picture why should we take extra pains to point out its defects? "He cannot live always," as the Song says, and therefore let us shew when we die that we have at least lived to some purpose.

All this time we have not commenced the extract which we promised from the old "Scrap-Book". But never mind, sometimes the preface, or the postscript, contains more real pith than the main body of the work:—and moreover either in writing or talking, I perfectly hate this everlasting monotonous of eternally harping upon one string.

The question has often been asked, sometimes in my presence but no doubt oftener behind my back, "why I come another voyage?" Why I was fool enough, at this advanced age of life to allow my land-moorings to be cut asunder, — my bark launched, and set adrift upon the mighty waters? To a person of your reflection and sagacity it were needless to name a reason. You, my good sir, stand at the head of a family; you are both a husband and a father; — to provide, therefore for the immediate

niant, and necessities of those to whom you are bound by the claims of friendship and love, - and by all the laws of God and man to provide for, must be a pleasure as well as a duty: - to explain any other case need I say more? You know the rest.

He will not ^{then} stop to prove a position which is self evident and requiring no proof; I will only say then that I came one day ago more to enable the inmates of No. 46 Fair Street, Southport, where all my future hopes are centred, to meet the iron face of poverty at the threshold and forbid his entrance; to say to him "you may look but you can't come in".

I meant fair give our darling boy, Seth Junior (as he is an only) a classical education, but on looking round upon those who have had these advantages bestowed upon them I cannot for my life avoid being seized with some misgivings on the subject; for as much as I appreciate learning and knowledge; and as much as I am delighted to hold a conversation with an intelligent scholar, I perfectly abhor this rag-a-bag race of drones that is constantly thrown upon the community from

our Colleges, Law-schools and Theological Seminaries. They make their appearance in Society in the character and dress of gentlemen without a six pence in their pockets, too lazy to work; and now sincerely I could wish that they were too proud to beg. It would seem to a thinking person that four years in College prepares a young man's mind for getting a living, in some shape or other, without sweat and nothing else; for come what will, blow high or blow low, fall back or fall edge, sink or swim, live or die, work they will not! An itinerant Quack doctor with his "Rheum-grass and liver root," is deserving of more praise for his exertions than these most miserable beings who drag out a most miserable existence; for in nine cases out of ten; and in fact in nine - teen cases out of every twenty their physical energies are impaired for the lack of bodily exercise. The Quack may not do us any material injury; for his nostrums are for the most part harmless, and should they prove of one other benefit may be the means of dispelling the blues, or occasionally directing our minds from the archaic belief that it is a blessing to be killed Scientifically.

~~After I reflect~~

When I reflect that the Village of
 has produced
 Polpis, better men fresh from the potato
 patch and peat-swamp than old Harvard
 can boast; I mean of course as regards
 our own town, I am ready to exclaim
 with Robert Burns,

"What all your jargon o' your schools,
 your Latin names for horns an' stools:
 If honest nature made you fools
 What sairs your grammars?
 We'd better taen up spades and shovels,
 or Rnapping hammers."

"A set o' dull conceited rappers,
 Confuse their brains in college classes!
 They gang in stirks, and come out asses,
 Plain truth to speak,
 An' syne they think to climb Parnassus
 By dint o' Greek!"

* * * * *

I will not quote further, for I had
 it to be rather unpardonable, in an
 epistolary correspondence when free ac-
 cess to authors is equally enjoyed by all.

From the dreary and discouraging
 picture which I have drawn in
 reference to our colleges, and Seminar-
 ies of learning, and their legitimate
 fruits, I think you will ask me
 what I want propose to do; whether
 I want convert those buildings in to

Laboratory's, Mechanick Shops
and cotton factories?" To this sug-
gestion I will venture to make one
word of reply;— provided the books
were preserved, and the printing
presses those powerful auxilia-
ries of American liberty were kept
in operation, as they most un-
doubtedly would be, you might
raise your Colleges to the ground—
reduce them to ashes as soon as you
pleased and winnow the ashes
through a Tiffany sieve in a hur-
ry-cane for all the harm it would
do to posterity; indeed, as my good
old grandmother used to say it
would be a "pretty while" before
posterity would suffer for the
want of a Doctor, Lawyer or Minis-
ter! You could no more stop, or
even check the onward progress
of the Arts and Sciences than you
could bail the ocean dry.

And each one can see with
half an eye that such a state of
things as what I have here alluded to
would be the direct means of bring-
ing into the field much native
talent which is now suffered to
lie dormant. True merit would
then be suitably appreciated by all

without looking to see whether the genius had had an A.M. M.D. or F.R.S. attached to his name: his intrinsic value would show itself in despite of the question "who's son is he?"

By counting the pages which I had calculated to copy from the "Scrap Book" and the blank pages that I have ^{unoccupied} left in this, I find that I shall fall short of room; and therefore as the Irish man would have it, I must begin by leaving something out.

* * * * *

"Between seven and fourteen years of age." But stop a little, before we advance another step. let me premise that not a sentence of this Scrap, nor not even a man-syllable, is intended for the press; therefore I request that this piece of autobiography which I am now about to pen shall stand or fall between she and I.

Well, as the extract says, "Between seven and fourteen years of age I had the advantage, or the benefit of a day school for three whole months!" The rest of my school learning was obtained in the evening; for my sister

-verses, (as soon as I was ten years
 old) were required through the
 day to assist a poor family in earn-
 ing bread to satisfy the pinching
 wants of hunger. My writing and
 reading lessons commenced at home;
 for it was considered perfect sense
 to send a child to school to
 learn to read and write, and a
 mistaken waste of time and money
 besides; — a little ciphering and a
 smattering of navigation was all
 that could be afforded, "for the like o'
 me," or indeed all that was consid-
 ered to be necessary. I never learn-
 ed to spell, this too was supposed
 to be superfluous, for I was told
 that a boy who could not take
 up a book and read without stop-
 ping to spell the words was thought
 to be, as the term was, a "little in-
 person to the common run." And
 as for writing it is as far forth
 as the mechanical operation of the
 art was concerned, any boy who
 could use his right hand well
 enough to whittle a stick round
 with a jack knife was considered
 a dolt if he failed to handle so
 simple an instrument as a goose
 quill. But after all, however
 paradoxical it may seem, I had

The benefit of a most excellent education but one learning. And what was better than all the rest, this domestic instruction I rec^d at the only proper place to receive it, viz. at home.

What extremely folly it is for parents to flatter themselves with an idea that seven years within the walls of a school-room will qualify a child to fight his way through the world; and earn a livelihood for himself and family: — In my humble judgment there never was a greater mistake than this; for if it be book-learning that we are after; if this be the ultima thule of our wishes, we often miss our aim; for as Burns says;

"They gang in stirks and come out afe!"
And when they leave school they have hardly book learning sufficient to enable them to commence their studies with any degree of profit.

But I will not steer out of my course as John Randolph said on another occasion, "to kick a sheep."

And so let us return to my own case. Those early lessons, which I learned at the fire-side after of my aged parents, (for they were old when I was young,) and coming as they did without alloy from the lips of as good a mother as ever children were blessed

which can never be spaced from my memory; — they will last with life. My mother! did I say? alas! how few living witnesses are there left to linger upon earth who can testify to what I am now about to state!

My mother, and it is not too much for me to say it, possessed a Christian spirit. She was a woman of sterling good sense, — she was blessed by nature with a most powerful and vigorous constitution and a mind originally as strong as iron.

After education, or I should say learning for I am loth to couple these two words together, was far more limited than that of any of her children.

It was with difficulty she could read her Bible, yet she was always delighted to listen to others; — John Milton's "Paradise lost" and "Paradise Regained" was particularly interesting to her.

My Grandfather was a rich farmer, and he had five daughters, but she thought never entered his head that a little learning might do them good!

This absurd notion of our an-

cesters in neglecting the education of the girls came down to us from the manners and customs of old Scotland. I thought that I would just name the fact for fear it had slipped your memory.

Yet notwithstanding all this, and much more that might with truth be named, we had an excellent mother and a most capital bringing up, and as I said before a first rate education but no learning.

With these glaring obstacles before us it might be considered good prudence in one, taking into the account my present occupation, to refrain from penning a line or putting a sentence on paper, but as our old friend Geo. Elphinstone would say "Keep modestly silent." But, my good friend, I have leisure moments to spare, and in the absence of spun wheels I find myself much better satisfied when day-light comes if I have spent a few sleepless hours during the preceding night in reading or writing: And, moreover I hold that the mind, that heaven-born faculty, should never be allowed to rust or corrode for the lack of employment; better to attempt something even if we fail, than to be deterred from making the attempt through fear that we may not succeed.

125 Notwithstanding these reflections, which I hold to be sound, I am often carried out of my usual tract, and thrown out of my balance by the wicked prejudices of the world: when this is the case I resolve in my own mind that I will throw by the goose-quill, as an article wholly and totally unfit for a whokeman to use, and never more pen a line for any body of a critick to laugh at. If I write it shall be to those who know me best and who love me most.

There is such an everlasting thirst in our very natures to search out the blemishes in our neighbours character, that old Satan himself is no doubt discouraged; he once could boast of being head Devil, but alas! he finds himself distanced, outstript, left in the rear sitting upon a cold stone, with his weapons inverted, mourning the loss of his former greatness. These things and the contemplation of things such as these, is enough to make a chrygman swear and a true christian speak in meeting!

I beg pardon for this spark of vanity; I cannot believe, after all, that the soul killing doctrine ever had its origin in my composition, and therefore let us hope! yes my friend we will hold on upon hope altho we find her at the bottom of Pandora's box! After hearing a school boys lesson in the afternoon which ought to

126 have been learnt in the morning
I take fresh courage; more especially
when I find the grand literati of the
world calling hard names and snapping
and snarling at each other like so many
Spaniels: — Pope and Swift lampooning
Dennis; Byron finding fault with
Burns, and calling him a mere sang writer
Leahurst laughing at Addison's false
grammar and calling Rymer a lying
historian &c. But the best thing, after
all, was the story of Young Ireland;
and one which never should be lost sight
of; for although he was hunted down by
the whole host of these learned rascals
yet he had the sagacity to dupe them all
by the pretended finding of those lost M.
S.S. of Shakspeare.

[A young man ought
to take up a book for the purpose of read-
ing it without having first read this story
Any person who could ^{not} relish the
writings of Shakspeare the "immortal
bard" as he was so called was certainly
wanting in taste and refinement; when
all of a sudden there comes a hardtop boy
a mere stripling who imitates his
self same "immortal bard" so nearly
that his productions were not only
pronounced to be genuine, (for nobody
but Shakspeare could write so well) but
were actually published at an enormous
price! And now after knowing all
this I shall not still believe these folk's

127 possessed all the learning - all the knowledge and all the critical acumen of the age! For my own part I would as soon believe Judas Iscariot if he should come forth with a commission to preach the Gospel.

* * * * *

I would give more for one single thought fresh from a man's "thinker" than I would for a cart load of pedantic trumpery brought from the closet at the useless expenditure of so much midnight oil. I am delighted, I am charmed with a piece of composition in which good sense and mature talent abound; the first thought is the rich jewel after all. David Crockett said "first be sure you are right and then go a head." The idea was a good one, and though simple in itself was in every one's mouth; - thousands have repeated the saying after Crockett; yet whenever one descends to make use of it second hand from his lips ought to feel a little mortified when they reflect that they had not thought of it first.

All I crave in these matters, is, that I may possess in my own cranium only one solitary original thought; if I should ever be lucky enough to find one I'll King about here I would make haste to let it out, that's pay. I hope that I may not be misunderstood, or

128 thought to be means is tant with
my self, when I declare which I most
sincerely and emphatically do, that I enter-
tain the profoundest respect for scholar-
ship and learning. * * * *

O dear heart! how much our
beloved Island suffers for the want of
a good sound Nautical School. My
dear Sir, upon this important subject
I shall venture to speak out. Your
Knowledge and taste for Astronomy and
Mathematics, and your perfect acqu-
aintance with the abilities of the only
teacher which we have, will, I feel
persuaded, lead you to the same reflections
with my self.

The very limited stay of our young
men on shore i.e. the interval be-
tween their voyages is so extremely
short that we cannot hope for any
great degree of perfection in their stu-
dies; yet, we insist on it that they
ought to learn some few things right.

By examining some of the scholars
who have been finished off in the
first Seminary of Nautical Science
in our town, I have been heart-sick
at the idea of rearing as fine a set of
young men as any town or city in
New-England can boast - not wanting in
physical strength nor in natural abili-
ties to take charge of all the wealth

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of Nantucket for forty months at a
time; and yet so consummately ignor-
ant of a science which is so insepa-
rably interwoven with their immedi-
ate profession. And who can won-
der at it? When a young student is
graciously told by his teacher, that,
he must "Sub-tract* the furthest
line of the Moon from the Star; and
add the horizontal paralax, etc."

I hold it to be almost an ind-
ispensible requisite in the person who
should attempt to teach this valuable
branch to Seamen that he should
himself be a practical man; and at
one time of my life I had nearly
formed a resolution, that, with the
aid and assistance of the Hon. Walter
Folger and myself, I would spend some
few sleepless nights in qualifying my-
self for this arduous task. But, my
good Sir, that day has gone by - thank
God, if I succeed in this my present
undertaking I hope to be able, so far
as pecuniary means shall go, to son-
oak the few remaining years of the
down-hill road of life without any
over wrought exertions of bodily labour
to add to my scanty fortune. And
yet notwithstanding I am paving the
way by the steady prosecution of this
voyage to a final abandonment of my
profession, and to be able to bid adieu to
* he might as well have said dis tract

the gallant ship once the pride of my heart, I will agree to one proposition should I live to return, viz. to use all my influence to bring about a change in our Nautical instruction which it is evident is so much needed; I will use my best endeavours to better that which I know to be most abominably bad:

I will raise my voice in behalf of a good sound Nautical school, headed by a competent teacher; and you my friend with other influential men of the town must raise yours. You, of course, understand some when I press the matter home to your minds and ask you to exert your united influence in the furtherance of this desirable object. Depend on it whenever this subject is better understood it will not fail to be suitably appreciated by parents, merchants, ship-owners and under-wrighters; — this point once carried, and the school established on a sound basis, there will be no danger of a retrograde movement, there will be no going back; so long as the ships are kept afloat its course will be onward, and every year will add something to the common stock. Our young men will then not only understand their profession much better than what they now do, but ^{the} risk of loss, and the chances of failure will no doubt be materially lessened, — and besides they will be able to hold up their heads before folk. my

By offering these crude opinions and in throwing out these gratuitous hints, we would not be thought to argue that we consider it at all necessary to make our ship masters Lawyers, Philosophers, or Metaphysicians; yet, we insist upon it that whenever they meet with gentlemen abroad, who are, like themselves, human beings, — born of a woman; that they should not feel inferior to any thing in the shape of a man.

I must confess that I feel extremely mortified to see our town-born children, who otherwise deserve well; and who have in reality much to be proud of, stand aloof from a Naval officer simply because they discover a smat of tinsel 'pon his shoulder in the shape of an epaulet: — these things ought not so to be.

"The rank is but the guinea stamp —
The man's the gold for a' that."

Burns
Let it be borne in mind that whatever has been advanced above, relative to the character and qualifications of our masters, my only aim has been, and is now, to

I should have shrank from the arduous task with modest diffidence.

No man can expect to take a popular stand in the community, nor should he imagine that he can for any length of time maintain an elevated post amongst his fellows, however pure his motives may be, without incurring censure from some quarter or other. As a presiding officer then, I could only flatter myself with a consciousness of having done my duty according to the best of my abilities and understanding; how far I acquitted myself in the discharge of the duties of the Chair must forever be left with my fellow citizens to determine.

For their extreme kindness and forbearance towards me during the sittings of the meeting I return them, through this medium, my most grateful feelings and my most cordial thanks.

And must pain say as one of old,

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." And my fellow citizens,

think on your friend and

Servant

John P. Phanny

Extract of a letter dated at
Sea, Aug. 20. 1842

To A. M. —

Before I close my letter which I did not intend should have been continued to this unpardonable length, I feel as though I ought to be indulged in the privilege of saying a single word in reference to the news from home in regard to the temperance reformation — By the last arrivals from our much loved Island I am told that nothing which we ever read in the chronicles can exceed it; It has, in fact, no precedent. It seems that all the old confirmed sets in the community have at length awaked from their beastly slumbers and returned once more to a sense of ~~their~~ duty — They have been changed in the twinkling of an eye; and have become ^{both} a temperate and a moral people: — and, moreover, have to a man joined the teetotals!

I hope that my informants were not deceived. It is said that there is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous — and so vice versa.

All I can say to this glorious change, is, I sincerely hope that it is so; yet it wants seem, to a person so far removed from the scene of action as

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What I am, almost too good news
to be true. What do I hear! and
what do I read? Why, the most ab-
andoned drunkards in town taken in-
to full communion! Held up as pat-
erns for little children to imitate; and
intrusted with posts of honor, and
the highest seats in the Synagogue
reserved for them! What a glorious
Millennium! As sincerely as I detest
and abhorrate hypocrisy and double-
dealing, I want not be foremost in
distrusting the purity of the ornaments of
these reformers; and most assuredly we
should not detract — to doubt is to be
skeptical, and I want therefore fair
believe; and will moreover add a
Lord help than any unbelief!

We are told so, and hence I sup-
pose it must be true, that now,
in this enlightened age of advancement
and improvement, rather than appre-
ciate exclusively a well spent life,
we must, instead thereof, look up
to these newly cut patterns of mor-
ality; who by their coming out have
set us a fresh example of well-do-
ing — An example too, altogether wor-
thy our imitation and patronage be-
cause it so emphatically points to
all those things which are pure,
and which are lovely, and which are of
good report. I am told that these
Star-lights can stand up in a public

139 assembly and play the game of tell-all
for our especial benefit and edification
without a blush. If it be true that
reformed nakes make the best husbands
what a great pity it is that these phi-
lanthropists had not commenced a refor-
mation steamer. After we have spent
the meridian of our days in riotous
living, — wasted the prime of life in
drunkenness and debauchery; casting loose
the dearest ties which bind society to-
gether, — abandoning wives and leaving
children to stray away — or throwing
both upon charity; all at once, and of
a sudden, after turning a deaf ear to
the counsels and admonitions of our
nearest and best friends, we arouse
from our stupid lethargy — awake, and
come forth, from our foolish dreams as
harbingers of a new era: — to tell of a
new Heaven and a new Earth. Glo-
rious news! It can never be too late
for us to do good — "the vilest sinner may
repent." And besides how soothing and
comfortable it is for us to be able to lean
with ^{such} confidence upon the sure saving
doctrine of the "eleventh hour."

Doctor Oliver Cromwell Lord protector
Bartlett, professor of medicine in the
town of Sherburne &c. &c. Once wrote a
dissertation on the Lords Supper. This
dissertation was published by request and

140 delivered to subscribers (Church members)
and read by them, and pronounced to be
very good. "O dear! what can the matter
be? dear, dear, what can the matter be!"

Extract of a letter to S. P. Jr. dated at
Sea Aug. 25. 1842 -

My dear Bay - I have not written you
in several months i.e. if we exclude the
correspondence, which I put on board ship
Spartan a short time since, containing a
long story (although not finished) concerning
the loss of one of my crew at Valparaiso,
by the direct interference of the master of a
French "Gum Brig." As we had nearly ex-
hausted the pages of the old Scrap Book, I
thought to give you and the girls a respite,
and also to take one myself, before I
took up the pen again. It is not how-
ever from the lack of timber that I have
come to this resolution; not at all. I
have, I can assure you, a plenty of stock
on hand; such as it is: the most of it is
in a rough state - newly cut from the
Forest, and consequently has not yet under-
gone any extra trimmings or carvings
by the hands of the artist; I can, ^{therefore} only
promise, if I promise at all, that whatever
I dole out shall be of the solid kind, no
renewing - no extra polish or varnishing.

"Such as I have I shall give unto thee"

My sentences may be found to want the ad-
ditional touch of the double ironed plane
and my periods may lack scholar-ship to
round their corners - But whatever I do say,
if I know my self, shall neither be ficti-
-tious

nor hypocritical. Whatever subject we undertake to canvas, let us by all means come to it with our minds free from prejudice, unbiased by ^{any} preconceived opinions, trusting to our own more say so; whenever the subject seems worth our while to examine further. Let every stumbling block be removed that lies in the pathway to truth.

If I remember rightly I have in a former place said something to you in reference to books and the selection of those ^{books} which are useful; for one single visit to a Library will tell you, in so many plain words, that it is quite impossible for you to find time (even if you should possess the inclination) to read all. A selection then must take place, and as no general rule can be given you for selecting out ^{one} set of opinions and leaving another. Your own good sense and sound discretion must dictate to you the proper course. In regard to reading as well as in other things tastes are different; and even this taste changes in the same person as life advances.

Reading, and the selection of Books.

Aside from the selection of books, for, after all, as we have already said, this must be left to sound judgement, I now come to the perusal ^{of books} is the gathering up the contents of the authors ideas. When you take up a book learn if possible to look through it at a single glance, for unless you possess some such instinctive sagacity you will be constantly liable to be misled by the preconceived notions which influenced the author to write as he did. With this warning you will be able to steer clear

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of the Saphistry, and captivating language
which very many of the catch penny pub-
lications are sprinkled with. By saying
this I don't mean that you are to hurry
over the pages of a valuable work,
merely for the purpose of having it in
your power to say that you have
read it; and to be thought the wiser in
consequence. Nay, if you discover that
the work has merit, (and this you'll per-
ceive before you ^{have} read six pages) if you
believe that it contains good sound sense
and logical reasoning, and a good moral
lesson to be at; with more and then a
somattering of some science scattered in
to give the book life; and rarity which
is said to be the spice of life; ^{by all means} why then,
dig into it in good earnest, and don't
leave it until you are able to fathom
its contents. This reading merely for
the sake of reading — this superficially
running over the pages of a book, with-
out thought or without study is a use-
less, profitless waste of time; if, when you
take hold of a book you have no def-
inite object in view you had better thr-
ow it down and go about something else.

John Locke says. "Those who have
read of every thing, are thought to un-
derstand every thing too; but it is not
always so. Reading furnishes the
mind with materials of Knowledge;
it is thinking makes what we read
ours." I have given you this quo-
tation from Locke, not because there
is any thing in it very deep or profound

(although it is strictly true) but be-
 cause it tallies with some of the notions
 entertained by your father in regard to
 these matters. We may read, and read,
 and read ^{again} and keep on reading until dooms-day
 and yet be but little the wiser un-
 less we digest what we read - for as
 I have told you before there are more
 readers than thin Reys. Another thing,
 in order to avoid being duped and led away by false shows
 learn to criticise as you go along; but
 don't read exclusively for the purpose
 of criticising; we should bear in mind
 that it is much easier to find fault
 than it is to better the thing found
 fault with, as it is more difficult to
 discover truth than to detect false-
 hood; the former lies deep and low,
 while the latter generally is floating a-
 bout the surface; and in regard to every-
 day occurrences if you want avoid con-
 tinually blundering into error, you must
 keep your reason ^{and your judgement, and your discretion} on the alert - you
 are not bound to believe every rattle
 that is floating in the breeze; neither
 are you to consider it your duty to
 contradict a person who may take
 the pains to relate to you a foolish
 story which he got from his ^{some} grand-
 father ^{40 years ago} ^{the tale} but that is one rea-
 son why you should. Should a young
 man tell you that he has repeatedly
 drove from town to Siasconsett in
 35 or 40 minutes, (you can tell him by
 way of rebuke that you have yourself travelled the road
 a few times) ^{have your private opinion in which you} but aside from this you
 may conclude that he has told a lie or

Killed a horse! One more mare in
 reference to criticising whatever you see,
 hear, and read. This propensity we must
 remember is not to be carried beyond its
 true medium; we are not to pass over
 true worth and merit to discover a blem-
 ish. Imperfections in ^{the character and conduct of} others are always
 plainer to be seen than ^{those in} our own, and
 therefore we should learn to deal with
 them fairly. ^{for although the world itself is a looking glass, we fail} For instance, in reading over
 my letters, which I have penned for your
 perusal with the best ^{intention} of ~~perfecting~~, you
 may discover many errors; correct them
 as you go along, for it would be ungen-
 erous to laugh at them; or even to
 find fault would be unwise, at any
 rate before you can manufacture
 better ones your self: correcting a sen-
 tence of false syntax is one thing,
 but being able to write a good letter
 is another and a different thing.

Nathaniel Bowditch was asked
 by his Capt. (on his passage from India)
 how he got along with perverting
 out the errors in Hamilton Moore's
 Epitome of Navigation, (which was then
 the best of the kind extant) said that
 he found it to be a tissue of errors
 from beginning to end; and, says young
 Bowditch, "instead of publishing the cor-
 rections in a separate sheet I think to follow
 up my investigations and when I arrive

146 in the United States ~~to~~ take out a copy-right in my own name." This he did do, and has given us the best mark of the kind that the world ever saw.

Now Sir, when you can take out a copy-right in your own name, you may set yourself up as a critic, extra.

And, even in this case, if you occasionally remember a fault of your own it may teach you to be charitable to others.

Those people who are continually finding fault, are generally good for nothing else:—"they can't discover for where lies, why such a one does not do better," yet we can discover with but half an eye why they don't do half so well!

A fellow who is forever finding grumbling you need not look to for the accomplishment of any thing with his hands or his head save the legitimate fruits of grumbling and fault-finding. I have so little love, or respect, or even patience with such people, that if I permitted my self to speak out and use a hard term I should say that they had been better dead than alive.

Reason. In order to be able to reason well upon any and upon all subjects which may come up for discussion you must learn to see things at a glance. Unless you carry about you some such touch-stone as this, or some abstract notions of the world as it is, you will continually find yourself running a

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head of your subject; and you will
not infrequently find that you are
involved in a labyrinth of particulars
without any definite ideas of the
outline or the conclusions. This dif-
ficulty often happens in your school-
studies; you have loaded your mind
with a mass of particulars, and un-
able to see through the mist or discover
the inference; ^{which is to be drawn from those particulars} you become out of patience
by being thus bewildered, and not being
able to see the result, the lesson is aband-
oned in despair. This perplexity which we
have just spoken of in ~~our previous~~ ~~cases~~
~~and~~ ~~from~~ ~~and~~
which is a serious bar in the advan-
cement of a child, is, in nineteen cases
in. twenty, a defect in the teacher in
not confining the child strictly to learn-
ing one thing at a time. This however
is a digression, for I was about to take a
more comprehensive view of studying
particular branches — we should not
keep our minds narrowed down to
minor objects unless it be indispensi-
ble in the advancement of learning.
There are some things to be learnt al-
most as a whole, i.e. for all common
practical purposes. For example Geog-
raphy may be studied with profit with-
out going into particulars — something
may be known in the science of Astron-
omy without giving up your whole
time and attention to the movements and
^{the} relative distances of the heavenly bodies

Not so with Grammar and arithmetic; in these two branches of useful learning you must begin at the beginning and advance step by step to the end.

I was about to go into some particulars relative to the study of Geography as illustrative of the idea of learning some ^{few} things in the grasp, but before I proceed I will just say in regard to School studies that with a thorough knowledge of Reading, Writing, Grammar, and the common rules of Arithmetic, you can make yourself acquainted with any science which you may fancy. But to go back a little, as we were just now speaking of abstract notions, I had it in mind to follow out the idea by alluding particularly to the study of Geography as an example -

As you would know something of the natural divisions of this terrestrial sphere which bears ^{us} ~~xxxx~~ up, I will say with Cobbett by all means begin with ~~xxxx~~ a knowledge and study of your own country first. Well, now as you have opened the book, and began your A, B, C. in the matter, it is here that I would put in a word in advance, whatever your school master might say to the contrary, which is simply this; before you trouble your head with the travelling bogs of Ireland, the shipwrecking sands in the desert of Arabia, the

149 floating gardens of Mexico, or the particular formation of the Coral reefs in the Pacific^{ocean}. You had better understand^{in the first place} that the Earth is round, and that it is composed of land and water, and that it is, moreover, ~~divided into two~~ balanced by two great Continents called the "Eastern" and "Western", with the Cape of Good-Hope forming the Southern extremity, and the North Cape of Norway the Northern extremity of the former; and Cape Horn the Southern, and Jey Cape the Northern of the latter: Having this outline in your mind you are able to follow a person in a moment, and to follow him understandingly too, when he speaks in general terms of navigating the Ocean. — When he tells you that he has been to Archangel in the White Sea, you are sensible at once, without a second thought, that he has sailed round the North Cape of Norway; because there is no other way but this for him to have got there.

If another tells you that he has been to the Island of Madagascar, or sailed through the Mozambique Channel, you immediately recognise his course to ^{have} been by the way of the Cape of Good Hope. And again, if a third says that he has visited Baldivia, Valparaiso, Callao, or Paytay, your mind is forthwith carried to South America, and you say, why this gentleman must have doubled Cape Horn. I am aware that

150 The books will tell you all these things; but without a teacher at your elbow the explanations laid down in books are not always easy to be understood by children:—it is in fact next to impossible to lay down rules adapted to the capacity of every child, and unless the teacher is ready and willing to explain, and moreover solicits your attention by kind words and looks, the mind of a child is not unfrequently perplexed and bewildered with a simple proposition which otherwise would appear to him as plain as the weather-cock on the top of the school house.

What I mean to say is, you should possess some general views of the natural divisions of the Earth before you puzzle your head about the creeks and lakes in the East Indies or the travelling bays in Ireland. I remember when we were bays how we all laughed at the foolish question of an old man who wanted to know "whether Bounaparte was an island or a part of the main land."

As to the properties of the upper crust of the Earth and the formation of the strata &c. there are scientific men who devote much more time and attention upon this subject than what any common man can well afford. Professor Silliman of Connecticut and other learned Geologists are continually making researches into this branch of science and the result of their labours is published from time

151 in a valuable periodical called *Sillyman's Journal* to time. I have merely touched upon the study of Geography to give you a sort of starting point, for there is nothing like being able to move with a right impulse at first; for if we set out ~~wrong~~ there is ten chances to one against success.

I cannot too often enjoin upon you the vast importance there is to be attached to the study of grammar; let what will come, let who will discourage you; be not deterred in any way or shape from ^{obtaining} a thorough knowledge of this branch of your school studies. You know that I have in some former letter recommended to you to learn to dance, it being undoubtedly a healthy and agreeable exercise; and naturally adds to the accomplishments of young persons; yet the idea of being painted out in a ball-room as a clipper, and at the same time a sting added to the remark, ^{and depend on't this sting will be added} that you had not learned your grammar, ought to make your ears tingle. You know my creed ^{which} is to have every thing in its appropriate place. I have no objection to the rational pleasures, but am decidedly opposed to the neglect of useful studies.* When I closed your last letter, previous to the correspondence, I had partly made up my mind that I should not write you again beyond the limits of a single sheet of paper, unless it was to indulge you and the girls with an extract from the Journal, but you see here I am, at it again; and as I hope with

* See note P 154

Some profit.

I have repeatedly said, whenever the subject has been introduced, in reference to my encountering another voyage at my advanced age of life, that it was to make you all happy — I mean in a pecuniary point of view. To place your Mother and her little ones (provided you were left without a leaning staff) beyond the reach of poverty. By this ^{honest and open} confession, don't let me deceive you, for when I declare that I am making this sacrifice purposely to keep you from ^{the} relentless grasp of poverty; I want you to distinctly understand that I would not take a step to load you with riches, (which often prove a curse than a blessing,) ~~that~~ that you might roll in luxurious idleness! Not at all. All I would aim at is to place you all in a situation to live as your father has lived independent and above board; out of reach of pinching want, and clear of the torments of debt.

And I sincerely hope that the result of this voyage may not prove that I have allowed my anxious cares in regard to your future welfare, to carry me beyond the bounds of reason. Your kind Mother will feel the force of this sentence; she often stifles her feelings in your presence when her heart is full to overflowing. It is your duty ^{when} to do every thing in your power for her comfort: — to prop her up, & to keep her up — to enliven her drooping spirits — to wait upon her as she has waited upon you by night and by day, in sickness and in health; never forgetting that her love to you

will be one which can never be made good. My anxious care is, and this is daily uppermost in ^{my} mind that we may be ~~able~~ ^{permitted} to all meet once more. If, my dear children, we can be blessed to arrive at this happy state of things which we now so fondly anticipate, how sincerely shall we all rejoice; how glad all your hearts will be and how thankful mine!

This happy ^{event} ~~state of things~~ ^{once} brought to pass
and I can then ask no greater boon than
to have you ^{in a final separation take peace} ~~round~~ some few short years,
^{and} to enjoy your society ^{as I have enjoyed it before} — to see you rise and
shine, — to give and to receive the social
visit — to be near you in sickness and in
health: — in a word and in fine to live
with you and finally to die with you;
and when the die is cast and you can
have me with you no longer, it will
be a solemn satisfaction to you all to have
the privilege of placing the green sod over
my grave, instead of reading a simple
notice in a news-paper that your father
had perished at sea! — And, my dear
friends, the turf will lie lightly on my
breast when placed there by those I love!

The marble slab will point you to the corner hillock beneath which rests the remains of one whose heart and soul was interwoven in the endearing affections of his family. And ~~then~~ ^{then}, my dear children as you make a pilgrimage, for you must undoubtedly will, to the sacred deposit for all the living

154 let the following sentiment which
now involuntarily falls from my pen
crave your minds

This grassy consecrated mound
But recently upraised,
Speaks volumes from the ground,
To thinking men amazed.

And — Shall we check the fountain?
And staunch the honest tears?
From weeping eyes once held
In memory so dear?

Say, do not suppress them;
In silence let them flow,
Fear him whose heart hath beat
In unison with you!

Extract of a letter to M—y dated
at sea, on board ship "W. Astor" Lat. 2° S.
Long. 135° W. Sept. 4. 1842.

I am, my dear wife, bound directly
to the Marquesas Islands, for wood,
water, and a recruit of fresh provisions
vegetables &c. and unless sperm whales
come in sight (and here, between paren-
thesis, let me say that this would be
no common affair; for we have seen
them but twice since we left Talcahu-
ano in April) we shall not tack ship
again until we see the land. [To this
last remark of "not tacking ship again"
perhaps it would be well to put in a
word of explanation for the benefit of
Seth Junior, and the satisfaction of Harriet
B.; you understand what we are now
navigating a part of the world where the
constant trade wind prevails throughout
the year; our course to Paoaheva, the
nearest land, is about South West, and the
distance 700 miles; so that you see with
the wind at East, or even at E. S. E. (and it is
seldom farther South than this) we can
fetch the land with a free sail.]

As you, ^{now perceiving} ~~by~~ the Latitude and the
longitude, I have taken hold of the pen in
time, supposing it possible that we might
meet with a ship at the Islands bound
directly to the United States; and in that
case for me to be (contrary to my usual
practice) without a letter written to my
best earthly friend, I should exclaim as
the girls do, sometimes, after a ship's letter
box is closed. "O dear! how sorry I am that

156 I did not write!" I am happy to say however that this allusion does not apply with equal force, nor indeed, with equal justice, to this letter; from whom I have already received No. 96!! The very figures ^(No. 96) speak volumes in reference to your industrious pen, And besides this high number, which, as Maria said in another case, ["if I should receive No. 100 from her it would denote that I had 99 more some where adrift upon the wide ocean"] I now and then pop upon one of the intermediate numbers. These I can assure you, I seize upon with eagerness and pore over their contents with intense interest; notwithstanding I am sensible that they are old - or at least second hand. If one of mine should be kept back a few days, ^{on the arrival of a ship for the Pacific} I can't believe that you would throw it into the fire without breaking the seal.

I received a letter from your hand dated in Dec. 1841. saying that you were all well at No. 46. up to that time - and that, moreover, you yourself was in 'good health!' I think that I understand this expression "good health". That is to say, I presume you mean for one to understand by it - that you are out of bed, - that you are on the foot, and can walk about house; but, that you are not able to ~~travel~~ ^{travel a great distance} ~~on the ground~~, on the ground.

I have since received another letter dated three months previous to that of No. 96! telling me that you had had a blister on your side. O dear heart! we are sometimes happy in our ignorance! Thank God the smart of that blister

157 had passed away ere its sting had reached the ears of your absent partner.

I cannot, in these matters, have my way, And hence it is we ever beg and pray.

For Heaven's sake, my dear friend, I desire that you would by all prudent means endeavour to preserve your health until my return. I further more beg of you, — I intreat you, and I implore you, come what will, not to exert yourself beyond your strength; but patch up, prop up, and try to Keep up a while longer for your husband's sake! Remember that you are left as a guard, — as an nurse, not as a labourer. All I ask in reference to the earning of a single dollar whilst I am gone, is, that you will, by your economical skill and foresight, Keep what little property we have together until I can relieve you from the care and responsibility — hold on to your end until I get upon the quarter-deck, and then I will take the watch with pleasure, and you may take a watch below.

You know my creed, which is, "that a man's eyes will accomplish more than both his hands." Sit down in your low chair, ^{then} and let the girls wait upon you; they have youth on their side, and there is no reason under Heaven, that I know of, why they should not nurse their mother. As regards

my self, for in connexion with
 yours my own situation is to be
 taken into the account; leave one
 side lame and the charm is broken;
 all goes for nothing. My own health
~~which~~ about which I was going to
 speak, (if it be right for me to use
 the word "health") is much better
 than usual: I can say this without fear
 of exaggeration or ^{without fear of being accused of} ~~disparaging~~ the truth.

I enjoy my meals and my natural
 rest at night better than what I have
 for years past, by strictly observing a
 few simple rules in regard to diet &
 regimen; which, when I name them
 you will call one half a Gray Horn-
 ite — no matter, never mind the
 "ite" provided we can preserve our
 health, and keep on our feet a little
 longer. And in the first place, as dri-

inking is entirely out of fashion, and
 done with, for which I am heartily
 glad, for I perceive you are all too
 totally at home. let us take up the
 subject of eating, or ^{we will} begin with that
 first. As to meals, I uniformly

take two in 24 hours, and no more;
 and these are taken always at an
 interval of more than six hours:
 I never ^{take} food of any description
 immediately before going to bed.

These hints were suggested to my
 mind years ago by witnessing the
 mode of living among the Spaniards,
 but I have to confess it to my own

Shame I never ^{have} had resolution
and philosophy enough ^{at my command} to put them
in practice before. The Spaniards
breakfast at half past eight or nine,
^{A.M.} and dine at three or four ^{P.M.}; and am-
ong the higher classes only, a cup of
tea with a piece of toast is served
up in the evening; but no hearty food.

But let us get back to my own
case. As soon as we approach
low latitudes, or arrive between
the tropick lines, my feather bed,
which you took so much pains
to furnish me with, is packed
up and stowed away: and my
straw under-bed, with the double
of a comforter spread over it, laid
in a berth with a board bottom,
serves me well, and furnishes me
with a very comfortable bunk. —
I sometimes take a short nap in
my 'Scansett arm chair, but on no
account, unless I am sick, do I in-
dulge my self in lying down through-
out the day: — whenever I am out at the
mast head with a spy-glass, which
luxury I shant indulge in often
but for a week eye, (which has
never forgot the first imprudent
use of a telescope) I employ the
^{major part} of my leisure ornaments in
reading and writing. I drink no

ardent spirits:— you are not to accept this as a pledge; indeed, I am aware that you do not require any; I therefore make no promises but merely state the fact as I go along.

We had, when we left home, a quarter cask of excellent Sicily Madeira wine but even this, which the good Lord allows us to take, ^{a little of} for the sake of the stomach, I find to be too strong, ^{and too heavy} for mine. But my friend (for I won't say "my dear" too often, for I mean for Malvina to read this letter) I am, I see, making out a long story about myself, very well, is it too long? is it moralizing? is it preachment? is it only talk for the sake of talking? I trust not. I hope I am not mistaken: I thought that I was treating upon facts. It certainly is not all fiction; it is not all illusion. The important subject of the preservation of health is surely not all a dream — I know that we often talk about it without meaning — we ill use it, we abuse it; we tamper with it, and not un frequently derange the system by the immoderate use of medicine — old Ben Franklin knew all this, and hence the saying of "Poor Richard," that "Experience is a dear school yet fools will learn in no other." I once heard a Skilful physician say that there was nothing that persons would dabble with more freely than

with their health — and yet this same physician (who has, since I sailed, gone to his long home) was continually tampering with medicine. I am perfectly aware that this simple common sense view that I have taken in regard to the preservation of that inestimable blessing "health," would be scorned at by one of your real Latin and Greek M.D.'s fresh from old Harvard. — And I might have some misgivings myself on the subject, and be inclined to throw away what little brains I possess, if I did not know that these self same scientific 'would be's' would then ravel a man in the back for to replace a bone, ^{which is} out ^{of place} in his foot.

Alas! how often do we deplore our want of knowledge and forecast in regard to the philosophy of human life — that is to say, we cannot by any skill or sagacity discover a method whereby human existence can be prolonged beyond a limited period; and yet how often do we neglect the every means within our reach to preserve life during the few short years allotted us!

But, I am wandering again, for I have not quite finished with diet and regimen; since I have confined myself to this new method of economy I find that my

114, 181. appetite has gradually improved; for I want not have you think that I have quitted eating, — and that my daily fair is a soda cracker and a tea cup full of Adams' ale! — I eat ^{I eat} meat, and fish, (when we can catch them) Black-fish and parpuss is a great treat. Whenever I can get at ripe fruit there comes a season of luxury for your husband, — I can eat it, day and night, with impunity; this, you are sensible, according to the nature of my voyage, must be a rarity. Our transoms have been, during the voyage, occasionally loaded with oranges, but occurrences of this kind, on board a whaleship, are like angels visits few and far between.

Adieu! You can't imagine how I regret the loss of a ripe greenish apple! I need not name to you the ^{which we were in the habit of taking in} enjoyment of that forbidden fruit, over the last remaining coals of an evening fire — for after denouncing two out of three which had been taken from the main hearth, — the one half of yours unconsumed was willingly handed to me for a topping off. But over and above all this was an honest confession, at these times, often repeated from your lips; when ever I seriously enjoined upon you to seize comfort by the forelock, and by all means to enjoy life as it passed — to this instruction your reply

to me was every thing; it sunk deep in my heart, — it rests with me still; I think of it as I walk my ship's deck; I can it over in my mind; and I ask no greater boon than to have it renewed. But, your reply, — here it is. "I am, my dear friend, taking comfort by whole sale every day of my life when my family are well and my husband is with me!!" But the allusion

to the apple has reminded me of other luxuries which are the legitimate fruits of domestic life, and which we are of course deprived of on ship-board — A pot of cad-

fish chowder, (or at chew-der) a dish of green peas, a cake of new-butter; a spoonful or two of new milk in the coffee, and a slice of black-berry pudding. — What a delicious treat to a person confined between stem and stern of a ship subsisting for months upon salt beef and pork; poor bread and musty flour; and butter which strongly savours of the tallow which contains your kitchen grease!

All this, however, is a drop, — a mere drop in the bucket, when compared with my anxious feelings in going so long without seeing a whale —